



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.56

Subject: Mentor and Host Homes for Youth in Post Custody Status

Supersedes: None

Local Policy: No

Local Procedures: No

Training Required: No

Applicable Practice Model Standard(s): Yes

Approved by:

Effective date: 01/01/05

Revision date:

Application

To All Department of Children Services Case Managers and Youth In Post Custody Status That Desire A Mentor Or Host Home For Interdependent Assistance

Authority: TCA 37-5-106

Policy

All Youth in post custody status may be offered the support of a mentor or mentor family. The department will support the mentor or mentor family with a foster care board payment. The mentor will provide all of that board payment to the youth.

Procedures

A. Philosophy

1. Youth who elect to receive voluntary services are often in need of a family that will provide support and guidance to the youth as they prepare to live interdependently in the community. A young person is interdependent if they are connected to surrounding persons and environments that contribute to an individual's emotional, physical, and psychological well being.
2. When youth turn 18, they continue to need support and guidance. There may have been some delay in learning the developmentally appropriate life skills. The mentor models appropriate life skills and assist the youth with

learning the skill and the opportunities to practice the skills.

3. Youth may be living in the Mentor/Host Home full time, in the summers or only during holidays. The youth may be receiving support from the Mentor/Host Home if the youth is living in an alternative living arrangement such as an apartment or dormitory.
4. Serving as a mentor parent for youth is a privilege and becoming a mentor home in Tennessee is not considered to be a right of persons making application. Applicants will be selected based on their ability to support and teach a youth as they prepare for life in the community. Applicants must have adequate living arrangements to meet the needs of children in state custody. Applications will be accepted from U.S. citizens or legal resident aliens who have been Tennessee residents for at least six (6) months.

**B. Desired
Characteristics**

1. Married or single persons may be approved as mentor parents. All mentor parents shall be approved based on their abilities to meet the special needs of youth in voluntary service status with the Department.
2. Other adults and children in the home shall be taken into consideration in terms of how they might be affected by or have an effect upon the young adult in voluntary services. Any adult in the household must meet all requirements including the criminal background checks to include fingerprinting and sex offender registry checks.
3. The Mentor Home shall not provide placements for more than one agency at a time without written agreement delineating the responsibilities of all parties involved and approved by the Regional Administrator or his/her designee. Refer to DCS policy [16.11, Shared Foster Homes](#).
4. Potential mentor parents shall possess personal qualities and skills conducive to good parenting of a youth such as:
 - ◆ Being open and positive minded;
 - ◆ Accepting of alternatives;
 - ◆ Knowledgeable about IL skills and program policies;
 - ◆ Being able to relate in a positive way to teenagers;
 - ◆ A positive example;

- ◆ Being available to help at all times;
- ◆ Being thoughtful;
- ◆ Being dependable;
- ◆ Possess the ability to encourage positive decision making; and
- ◆ Have a willingness to stick with youth even after voluntary services are complete.

**C. Home Study,
Evaluation and
Training Process**

1. Within two (2) working days of the initial contact, DCS staff shall make contact with the interested applicant.
2. The application forms (See DCS policy [16.4, Dual Approval Process for Resource Parents](#) and other documents will be mailed to all interested applicants requesting information including information for the next available intake meeting and training(s).
3. As outlined in DCS policy [16.4, Dual Approval Process for Resource Parents](#), a criminal background check to include finger printing and sex offender registry check will be conducted on all prospective mentor/host parents. Although these youth are considered adults, they still may experience issues with safety. Persons with a felony conviction for child abuse/neglect, spousal abuse, crimes involving violence including rape, sexual assault or homicide, but not including other physical assault or battery, shall not be approved as foster parents/mentors/hosts. Persons with other types of criminal charges may be considered. In those situations, the Regional Administrator shall request a waiver from the Director of Foster Care prior to approval of the mentor parents.
4. If a prospective mentor/host parent has not been in residence in the county for a period of five (5) years any criminal record must be determined by a record check in his or her current place of residence. If no criminal record exists and all other requirements are met, the mentor parent may be given approval.
5. The TBI Sexual Offender Registry must also be checked, via the Internet and documented in the foster home record.

6. The Child Protective Services records must be reviewed statewide to ascertain if there is any history of child abuse and/or neglect.
7. The youth will be notified of any and all charges the mentor or host has on record.
8. DCS staff must verify the mentor parent/applicant's previous involvement with any public or private child welfare agency, whether they were previously approved as foster or adoptive parents or otherwise received services.

D. Age Requirements

1. The age of a potential mentor/host parent shall be considered primarily as it affects his/her physical energy, maturity, flexibility and ability to care for a specific youth. Because mentor/host homes care for youth who are age 18 up to 21, the mentor parents must be at least 25 years of age.
2. In extraordinary situations, particularly in the case of a relative placement, the Director of Foster Care may grant a policy waiver for applicants that are age 18 and up through 24 years of age.

E. Income and Employment

1. The prospective mentor/host income must be stable and sufficient to maintain his/her current family without the mentor/host board payment. Form *CS-0341, Monthly Family Income and Expenditures*, must be completed.
2. Special consideration should be given to extended family members and persons with a prior connection to a child regarding this requirement.
3. All mentor/host(s) may be supported with a board payment. If youth is living with mentor the mentor/host will provide part of the board payment to the youth. If youth lives apart from mentor/host the mentor/host will provide the board payment to the youth.

F. Employment of mentor/host

1. Mentor/host(s) of youth may be gainfully employed outside the home, but arrangements should be made between the youth and mentor in cases of emergencies.
2. Mentor/host(s) employment within the home is permissible, but should be assessed in regard to its impact on youth who reside with the mentor/hosts' ability to simultaneously

meet the needs of the youth.

**G. Ability to work
with the
Department of
Children's
Services**

1. Work in partnership with DCS to assist youth in making key decisions related to the well being of the youth.
2. Ensure youth receives funds from the monthly board payment provided to the mentor/host for the youth's benefit.
3. Participate in family meetings with the youth and use mediation if necessary to preserve the mentor/youth relationship.

Forms

CS-0431 Monthly Family Income and Expenditure form

Collateral Documents

DCS Policy 16.4, Dual Approval Process for Resource Parents

DCS Policy 16.11, Shared Foster Homes

Standards

DCS Practice Model Standard - 8-103

DCS Practice Model Standard - 8-104